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14 March 1985

Dear Lord Avebury,

On behalf of the Secretary-General and in his absence, I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter of 25 February relating to a statement attributed to him by Sinar Harapan on 8 February. It is, indeed a fact that the Secretary-General, at a press conference in Jakarta, was asked whether the question of East Timor would be on the agenda of the General Assembly this year and that he replied that it might not be. It is obvious that what comes across in the Indonesian-language Sinar Harapan is intended to reflect that exchange.

In accordance with established practice, the question of East Timor has been included in the provisional agenda of the upcoming session of the General Assembly. It is true that the Assembly decided at its last two sessions to defer consideration of the question and may well do so again. However, the decision to debate or defer consideration of a particular item does not fall within the Secretary-General's purview and can only be taken by the Assembly itself, which is master of its own procedure. It is in that context that the Secretary-General's comments at his press conference in Jakarta must be understood.

Yours sincerely,

Rafeeuddin Ahmed
Under-Secretary-General

Lord Avebury
House of Lords
London